

1. What exactly is considered ABUSE for our elderly population?

2. What are some types actions against seniors that are considered abuse?

There are several types of **abuse** of older people that are generally recognized as being elder abuse, including:

- **Physical:** e.g. hitting, punching, slapping, burning, pushing, kicking, restraining, false imprisonment / confinement, or giving excessive or improper medication as well as withholding treatment and medication.
- **Psychological/Emotional:** e.g. **humiliating** a person. A common theme is a perpetrator who identifies something that matters to an older person and then uses it to coerce an older person into a particular action. It may take verbal forms such as yelling, name-calling, **ridiculing**, **constantly criticizing**, accusations, **blaming**, or non verbal forms such as ignoring, silence, shunning or withdrawing affection.
- **Elder financial abuse:** also known as financial exploitation, involving misappropriation of financial resources by family members, caregivers, or strangers, or the use of financial means to control the person or facilitate other types of abuse.
- **Sexual:** e.g. forcing a person to take part in any sexual activity without his or her consent, including forcing them to participate in conversations of a sexual nature against their will; may also include situations where person is no longer able to give consent (**dementia**)
- **Neglect:** e.g. depriving a person of proper medical treatment, food, heat, clothing or comfort or essential medication and depriving a person of needed services to force certain kinds of actions, financial and otherwise. Neglect can include leaving an at-risk (i.e. fall risk) elder person unattended. The deprivation may be intentional (active neglect) or happen out of lack of knowledge or resources (passive neglect).

3. Please share some warning signs that can indicate that someone is being abused.

The key to prevention and intervention of elder abuse is the ability to recognize the warning signs of its occurrence. Signs of elder abuse differ depending on the type of abuse the victim is suffering. Each type of abuse has distinct signs associated with it.

- **Physical abuse** can be detected by visible signs on the body, including bruises, scars, sprains, or broken bones. More subtle indications of physical abuse include signs of restraint, such as rope marks on the wrist, or broken eyeglasses.
- **Emotional abuse** often accompanies the other types of abuse and can usually be detected by changes in the personality or behavior. The elder may also exhibit behavior mimicking dementia, such as rocking or mumbling.
- **Financial exploitation** is a more subtle form of abuse, in comparison to other types, and may be more challenging to notice. Signs of financial exploitation include significant withdrawals from accounts, belongings or money missing from the home, unpaid bills, and unnecessary goods or services.
- **Sexual abuse**, like physical abuse, can be detected by visible signs on the body, especially around the breasts or genital area. Other signs include inexplicable infections, bleeding, and torn underclothing.

- **Neglect** is a type of abuse in that it can be inflicted either by the caregiver or oneself. Signs of neglect include malnutrition and dehydration, poor hygiene, noncompliance to a prescription medication, and unsafe living conditions.

4. Let's talk a little about the health consequences for a person who is being abused.

The health consequences of elder abuse are serious. Elder abuse can destroy an elderly person's quality of life in the forms of:^[13]

- Declining functional abilities
- Increased dependency
- Increased sense of helplessness
- Increased stress
- Worsening psychological decline
- Premature mortality and morbidity
- Depression and dementia
- Malnutrition
- Bed sores
- Death

The risk of death for elder abuse victims are three times higher than for non-victim

5. Who are usually the common abusers?

An abuser can be a spouse, partner, relative, a friend or neighbor, a volunteer worker, a paid worker, practitioner, solicitor, or any other individual with the intent to deprive a vulnerable person of their resources. Relatives include adult children and their spouses or partners, their offspring and other extended family members. Children and living relatives who have a history of substance abuse or have had other life troubles are of particular concern. For example, HFE abusive individuals are more likely to be a relative, chronically unemployed, and dependent on the elderly person.

Perpetrators of elder abuse can include anyone in a [position of trust](#), control or authority over the individual. Family relationships, neighbors and friends, are all socially considered as relationships of trust, whether or not the older adult actually thinks of the people as "trustworthy". Some perpetrators may "groom" an older person (befriend or build a relationship with them) in order to establish a relationship of trust. Older people living alone who have no adult children living nearby are particularly vulnerable to "grooming" by neighbors and friends who would hope to gain control of their estates.

6. What are some risk factors that are likely to increase the possibility of an elderly person to become a victim of being abused.

There are several [risk factors](#), which increase the likelihood that an elderly person will become a victim of elder abuse. Such risk factors for elder abuse include an elderly person who:

- Has memory problems (such as dementia)
- Has physical disabilities
- Has depression, loneliness, or lack of social support
- Abuses alcohol or other substances
- Is verbally or physically combative with the caregiver

- Has a shared living situation

Barriers to obtaining statistics

Several conditions make it hard for researchers to obtain accurate statistics on elder abuse for the following reasons:

- Elder abuse is largely a hidden problem and tends to be committed in the privacy of the elderly person's home, mostly by his or her family members¹
- Elder abuse victims are often unwilling to report their abuse for fear of others' disbelief, fear of loss of independence, fear of being institutionalized, fear of losing their only social support (especially if the perpetrator is a relative), and fear of being subject to future retaliation by the perpetrator(s),
- Elder abuse victims' cognitive decline and ill health may prevent them from reporting their abuse
- Lack of proper training of service providers, such as social workers, law enforcement, nurses, etc., about elder abuse, therefore the number of cases reported tend to be low poor elders
- The subjective nature of elder abuse, which largely depends on one's interpretation.
- Another reason why there is a lack of accurate statistics is the debate of whether to include self-neglect or not. Many are unsure if it should be included since it does not involve another person as an abuser. Those opposed to the inclusion of self-neglect make the claim that it is a different form of abuse and thus, should not be included in the statistics. Due to this discrepancy and the others mentioned above, it is difficult to get accurate data concerning the abuse of the elderly.

6. What preventive methods can we use protect our senior population from abuse?

Doctors, nurses, and other medical personnel can play a vital role in assisting elder abuse victims. Studies have shown that elderly individuals, on average, make 13.9 visits per year to a physician.

Although there has been an increase in awareness of elder abuse over the years, physicians tend to only report 2% of elder abuse cases. Reasons for lack of reporting by physicians include a lack of current knowledge concerning state laws on elder abuse, concern about angering the abuser and ruining the relationship with the elderly patient, possible court appearances, lack of cooperation from elderly patients or families, and lack of time and reimbursement. Through education and training on elder abuse, health care professionals can better assist elder abuse victims.

Educating and training those in the criminal justice system, such as police, prosecutors, and the judiciary, on elder abuse, as well as increased legislation to protect elders, will also help to minimize elder abuse and will also provide improved assistance to victims of elder abuse.

In addition, community involvement in responding to elder abuse can contribute to elderly persons' safety. Communities can develop programs that are structured around meeting the needs of elderly persons. For example, several communities throughout the United States have created Financial Abuse Specialist Teams,^[34] which are multi-disciplinary groups that consist of public and private professionals who volunteer their time to advise Adult Protective Services (APS), law enforcement, and private attorneys on matters of vulnerable adult financial abuse.

Resource: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elder_abuse